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Message Text

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ORIGIN INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-07 /096 R

DRAFTED BY INR/REA:RFDORR:JCM
APPROVED BY EA/K:EHURWITZ
EA/K:FHMISCH
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P R 292002Z JUN 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 151506

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PROP, KN

SUBJECT: PYONGYANG RADIO RESUMES CRITICISM OF U.S.
KIM IL-SONG CONTINUES MODERATE STANCE

REF: SEOUL 5399

1. DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES EMBASSY COMMENT ON REVIVED ANTI-U.S. TONE IN NORTH KOREAN MEDIA, COUPLED WITH COMPARATIVELY MODERATE THRUST OF KIM IL-SONG INTERVIEW WITH LE MONDE. FOLLOWING THOUGHTS (BY INR/REA AND EA/K) CONFIDENTIAL

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MAY BE USEFUL AND COULD BE SHARED WITH ROKG.

2. IT HAS BEEN TRADITIONAL, OVER RECENT YEARS, FOR KIM IL-SONG TO VOICE MODERATE VIEWS IN DISCUSSIONS WITH FOREIGN JOURNALISTS. THESE ARE INVARIABLY FOR FOREIGN CONSUMPTION AND, LIKE LE MONDE INTERVIEW, ARE NOT CARRIED IN PYONGYANG DOMESTIC MEDIA. AT SAME TIME IT HAS BEEN

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CUSTOMARY FOR MORE CRITICAL VIEWS OF U.S. TO BE EXPRESSED AT A LOWER LEVEL, FOR EXAMPLE, IN KCNA NEWS DESPATCHES AND RPR COVERAGE AND THESE ARE INTENDED FOR BOTH FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC AUDIENCES. THIS TWO-TRACK APPROACH ENABLES PYONGYANG TO APPROVE OF U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWALS ON ONE HAND, WHILE CRITICIZING THE WITHDRAWALS AS TOO SLOW ON THE OTHER. IN RECENT MONTHS, IT HAS ENABLED NORTH KOREA TO CRITICIZE "BELLICOSE ELEMENTS" IN THE U.S. WITHOUT DIRECTLY ATTACKING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION.

3. EVEN IN THE MOST VITRIOLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS FROM PYONGYANG SINCE THE JUNE 25 ANNIVERSARY OF THE KOREAN CONFLICT--AS EMBASSY NOTES, A SEASONAL BENCHMARK FOR ANTI-U.S. INVECTIVE--WE NOTE SOME ELEMENTS OF RESTRAINT. SOME COMMENTARIES CONTINUE TO LAMBAST "BELLICOSE ELEMENTS" IN THE U.S. RATHER THAN THE ADMINISTRATION ITSELF, A SEMANTIC DEVICE IN USE SINCE LAST YEAR'S U.S. ELECTION. CHONG CHUN-KI'S SPEECH OF JUNE 25, CONSIDERING THE OCCASION, SEEMS TO US RELATIVELY RESTRAINED, AND WE NOTE THAT CHONG CALLS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS "AT AN EARLY DATE"--WHEREAS THE PRC STATEMENT ISSUED ON THE SAME DAY CALLS FOR WITHDRAWAL "IMMEDIATELY". THE TOUGHEST LANGUAGE AIMED AT THE U.S. IN RECENT DAYS HAS COME FROM PYONGYANG RADIO, CRITICIZING THE VISIT OF A U.S. 7TH FLEET FLAG SHIP TO SOUTH KOREA, DEPLOYMENT OF A-10 AND B-52 AIRCRAFT, AND OTHER ALLEGED CONFIDENTIAL

"WAR MANEUVERS". SOME OF THIS, HOWEVER, HAS CLEARLY BEEN DIRECTED AT SEOUL RATHER THAN WASHINGTON, WITH THE NORTH KOREANS PLAYING-UP PRESIDENT PARK'S RECENT VISIT TO A FRONT-LINE UNIT. EVEN DURING RECENT PERIOD OF RELATIVE MODERATION, PYONGYANG HAS HAD LITTLE FAVORABLE TO SAY ABOUT ROKG.

4. APART FROM HIS EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION, WE FIND LITTLE SUBSTANTIVELY NEW IN KIM IL-SONG'S LE MONDE INTERVIEW. PROPOSAL FOR MOVING TOWARD REUNIFICATION WITH A CONFEDERAL SYSTEM WHICH WOULD TEMPORARILY LEAVE THE SEPARATE GOVERNMENTS IN KOREA INTACT HAS BEEN A STANDARD KIM SUGGESTION TO FOREIGN JOURNALISTS, AND DATES TO 1971. KIM'S MODERATE REMARKS TOWARD USG AND CARTER ADMINISTRATION ARE SIMILAR TO REMARKS HE MADE AS LONG AGO AS NOVEMBER 1976. NEVERTHELESS, DECISION TO HOLD INTERVIEW AT THIS TIME APPEARS TO SIGNAL AN INTENTION TO CONTINUE USING "REASONABLE" TONE FOR FOREIGN AUDIENCES.

5. WE SUSPECT THAT ALL OF THE FACTORS CITED BY EMBASSY (REFTEL, PARA 3) ARE INVOLVED IN CURRENT NORTH KOREAN OUTPUT, AND THAT PYONGYANG IS INDEED HEDGING ITS BETS

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AGAINST OUTCOME OF SCM AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN TROOP WITHDRAWAL PLANS. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT PYONGYANG IS GEARING UP FOR SOME NEW POLICY PROPOSAL, SUCH AS MARCH 1974 PROPOSAL FOR A BILATERAL PEACE AGREEMENT WITH U.S. THUS, WHILE WE CONTINUE TO FIND NORTH KOREAN MOTIVES DIFFICULT TO ASSESS, WE WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY FOR SIGNS THAT SOME NEW INITIATIVE IS IN THE OFFING. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
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Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: PROP, KN, (KIM IL-SONG)
To: SEOUL
Type: TE
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Review Markings:
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